

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 17, 2014

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers,

We write to request that you direct the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Subcommittee to convene a hearing immediately on the public health threat posed by the West Africa Ebola outbreak that has resulted in three Ebola cases in the United States, and the Enterovirus D668 that is continuing to spread across the country. Last week, we sent a letter to Chairman Jack Kingston to request a hearing, but we have yet to get a response. As you know, the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations subcommittee holds jurisdiction over funding for two of the primary federal public health agencies standing at the forefront of this crisis – the CDC and the NIH, in addition to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA). Our subcommittee has not heard publicly from the CDC or the NIH since March, and we need to independently assess their response to these critical public health crises. That is our solemn responsibility as members of the Subcommittee.

We were chagrined to learn that your spokesperson said that the Subcommittee would not hold a hearing because Congress was not in session. This statement is nonsensical as the Homeland Security Committee held a Field Hearing on October 10 and Energy and Commerce Oversight Subcommittee held a hearing on October 16 to discuss this public health crisis.

As you know, our subcommittee has been forced to make difficult choices due to our constrained budget environment over the past four years. That has resulted in the purchasing power of the NIH being reduced by 10 percent over the last four years. Our public health infrastructure at the CDC and HHS has also been forced to make do with less. CDC's program that supports our state and local public health professionals who are working on the front lines to contain this current Ebola epidemic has been cut by 16 percent over the last four years after adjusting for inflation. The program at HHS that helps hospitals be ready to contain deadly epidemics like Ebola and prepare for patient surges from outbreaks like Enterovirus D68 has been reduced by 44 percent over the same period after adjusting for inflation.

While we may disagree on the merits and the necessity of these cuts, we have a responsibility to ensure that CDC, NIH and the other public health agencies under our

jurisdiction have sufficient resources to protect the public health and are taking the appropriate actions today to address it.

Therefore, we repeat our request – please direct Chairman Jack Kingston to convene a Subcommittee hearing this month to gather the information we need to make informed decisions. It is particularly important for the Committee to consider Labor, Health, and Education programs as the Committee has not even drafted a bill for the current fiscal year.

Sincerely,



ROSA L. DeLAURO
Ranking Member
Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations
Subcommittee



NITA LOWEY
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee


LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress
BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress
MIKE HONDA
Member of Congress